

How Faculty and Administration Can Increase Research Reputation of their Institution?

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Faculty Research Council

The connection between grant revenue, researchers' productivity, institutional reputation and the likelihood of future grants is observed at most universities. Institutions at which a large number of faculty members secure external grants, sometimes pretty substantial ones, tend to have a better reputation than those that have smaller number of grantees and total grant dollars. The lesson here is that success breeds success.

Like the serial grantee, Matthew effect and halo effect - one who has a track record of securing grants is more likely to be successful when applying than one who does not. It may be the case that applicants from institutions with a high reputation benefit from favorable bias toward their projects, gain cumulative advantages over colleagues, and obtain more resources in the future. These researchers are implicitly trusted as capable even if their project may objectively rank lesser than others. But this is not the point of interest here. What gets missed in the equation regarding grants and research reputation is the impact that the act of applying for grants, notwithstanding success, can have on increasing the reputation of an institution. If you don't apply for funding or grants as researchers or scholars, you run the risk of playing the funding game from the sidelines. Another lesson, "Even in a world of single-digit success rates, there are actions you can take to improve your chances of being awarded that research grant" (Kamerlin, 2019).



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Applying for an external grant means putting research capacity, creativity, and track record as researcher and supervisor under scrutiny. It is signalling to adjudicating committee members that at one's institution there are high caliber researchers who engage in high quality graduate student training and mentoring. The more applicants from an institution, the stronger the signal is. With an increased number of applications comes an increased likelihood of success. And success at securing Grants will yield future successes. If we don't apply for grants, we'll never be successful. Emily Sohn (2020) commented "...writing tends to provoke anxiety among

early-career scientists, but opportunities exist for people who are willing to take the time to develop ideas and push past rejections and negative feedback, she says. We can't review proposals that we don't get" (135).

Applying for grants is time consuming and often disappointing. Some researchers may not think it is necessary for the kind of work they do, although there is always a way to budget for research assistants and fellows who can thus receive valuable training and provide meaningful assistance in the development of a project. But the efforts always pay off, even when one is not successful. Many of us have had repetitively failed grant applications, although we put lot of work to submit the best

application we could. Every such rejection is always very disappointing, yet it can positively impact both your research maturity and the university. For some of us, grants were earned upon the 5th try. If you don't succeed at first, try, try again!

Those who don't try cannot be successful. Those who don't try do not put either their or the university's name out there. We need to make the effort of putting ourselves--individually and collectively--out there so that our research reputation rises. We will be unsuccessful, but we will also be successful. And as we are more successful, we will be even more successful. It is our duty to do so. It is also our duty to help junior colleagues get in the grant application game by mentoring them or including them in our own grant applications. Failure in securing grants "...can be disappointing, but there can be a silver lining: You may get the benefit of a constructive critique of your proposal and an invitation to revise and resubmit it. Plus, learning how to cope with rejection is a key part of growing as a researcher. If you're not experiencing at least occasional rejection, you're not stretching far enough" (Yeager, 2017).

How administration can increase research reputation of the institution? Provide easily solicited or unsolicited research support.

To build reputation, a university must be competitive in research and innovation, offering the World and society solutions to modern problems. Reputation is not built on small pedagogical experiments and learning initiatives, which do not make an important, wide impact beyond the educational experience of students enrolled in the university. Unfortunately, most pedagogical, and experiential learning options are not even unique to Brock, so they do not even improve the recruitment of undergraduate students. All Universities advertise and implement similar educational strategies. Only strong research stories, which will also improve our reputation to employers will make a difference. Applying for grants is too often a humbling experience, but the challenge at hand is to apply without fear of failure.

The impression of researchers across the university, is that research achievements are not a priority for the senior administration. As a result, they have failed to convey a consistent message as a strong comprehensive university. We need our leaders to focus on raising morale and build a team spirit towards research. Thus, research support must be uniting, not divisive. The latest method adopted by Brock's senior administration for research related teaching and graduate supervision workload reductions was both cumbersome (for applicants and adjudicators) and divisive. This is because the number of reductions approved was very low compared to the number of faculty members eligible and worthy of the reduction. In addition, the work from home policy has increased the workload for faculty members due to the reduction in services provided to them. Online teaching did not happen without serious reductions in research time. Brock faculty are in desperate need of quality time to produce quality research.



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The Faculty Research Council is a group of committed Brock University faculty and librarians that promote the value and importance of research.

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